

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

After the foregoing Amendment, claims 1-16 are currently pending in this application. The claims have been amended to address the informalities noted by the Examiner and in accordance with the telephonic interview with the Examiner to place them in a form in which it is believed that all claims are now allowable. Applicant respectfully requests entry of the claim amendment, since at the very least, the claim amendments eliminate issues and place the application in better form for appeal. Applicant submits that no new matter has been introduced into the application by these amendments.

Telephonic Interview

The Examiner is thanked for granting a telephonic interview with the Applicant's representative on June 13, 2008. During the interview, the Applicant's representative explained the differences between the cited reference (Anderson et al.) and the pending claims and the Examiner agreed that the cited reference does not teach a moving film sheet, (i.e., the flat surface), moving along with the ultrasonic probe when the object placed on top of the flat surface is scanned.

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claims 1 – 16 because they contain improper "means plus function" language. The means plus function language has been removed. The withdrawal of the objection to the claims 1 – 16 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102(e)

Claims 1 - 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0241423A1 to Anderson et al. (hereinafter "Anderson").

With respect to claim 1, Anderson fails to disclose that the flat surface of the movable support for placing the deformable object for scanning is attached to the ultrasonic probe such that the ultrasonic probe and the flat surface move together when the deformable object is scanned and the ultrasonic wave transmission/reception surface is substantially flush with the upper surface of the flat surface.

In Anderson, the ultrasonic probe is not attached to a flat surface. In Anderson, the film sheet that corresponds to the flat surface in claim 1 is fixed to the frame and does not move along with the ultrasonic probe while the object is scanned. Anderson discloses as follows:

[0040] Scanning assembly 114 comprises a frame 214 having a taut film sheet 216 extending thereover, the frame 214 and film sheet 216 together forming a closed chamber that houses a probe assembly 218. ... The film sheet 216 is attached to the frame 214 in a substantially airtight manner so as to form a closed environment, thereby inhibiting evaporation of the coupling agent or other forms of coupling agent loss. ... (Emphasis added)

[0041] Probe assembly 218 is mechanically coupled to the frame such that it can sweep laterally across the breast (i.e., in the +x/-x direction in FIG. 2) under motor control while its transducer surface is in contact with the film sheet 216. Preferably, the transducer of the probe assembly 218 is a linear array transducer that is sufficiently long, e.g., 15 cm, to obtain a volumetric B-mode scan of the breast in a single sweep. (Emphasis added)

In Anderson, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, a taut film sheet 216 and a frame 214 form a chamber and the film sheet is attached to the frame in a substantially airtight manner. The object 302 to be scanned is placed on top of the film sheet 216. The probe assembly sweeps the object while in contact with the lower surface of the film sheet 216. The film sheet 216 is fixed to the frame 214, and does not move along with the probe assembly. In contrast, in claim 1, the ultrasonic probe is attached to the flat surface and the ultrasonic probe and the flat surface move together while sweeping the object for scanning.

In addition, Anderson fails to disclose that the ultrasonic wave transmission/reception surface of the ultrasonic probe is substantially flush with an upper surface of the movable support. In Anderson, the ultrasonic probe moves in

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contact with the lower surface of the film sheet and the ultrasonic wave transmission/reception surface is not flush with the upper surface of the movable support.

Anderson fails to disclose that the flat surface of the movable support for placing the deformable object for scanning is attached to the ultrasonic probe such that the ultrasonic probe and the flat surface move together when the deformable object is scanned and the ultrasonic wave transmission/reception surface is substantially flush with the upper surface of the flat surface. Therefore, claims 1-16 are not anticipated by Anderson.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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